



# USAF Regional Hospital Now Has an Infectious Diseases Specialist!

## What is an Infectious Diseases Specialist?

An infectious diseases (ID) specialist is a doctor of internal medicine who is qualified as an expert in the diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases. After seven or more years of medical school and postgraduate training, ID specialists complete two to three years of additional training in infectious diseases.

ID specialists have expertise in infections of the sinuses, heart, brain, lungs, urinary tract, bowel, bones and pelvic organs. Their extensive training focuses on all kinds of infections, including those caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites. Many ID physicians specialize in treating patients with infections due to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the cause of AIDS.

## What does an Infectious Diseases Specialist do?

The role of an infectious disease specialist is to review a patient's medical data, including records, X-rays and laboratory reports. They may perform a physical examination, depending on the type of problem. They also counsel healthy people who plan to travel to countries where there is an increased risk of infection.

Laboratory studies are often necessary and may include blood studies and cultures of wounds or body fluids. They may order blood serum studies for antibodies indicating the presence of unusual or uncommon diseases. These studies may help explain the results of studies that a general internist may already have done.

Work in the infectious disease specialty is limited to diagnosis and medical treatment. Infectious diseases specialists do not perform surgery.

## How can you be seen by the Infectious Diseases Specialist?

1. ***If you are planning to travel internationally, you can call (850) 883-8600 to arrange an appointment in the Travel Medicine Clinic. No consult or referral is necessary.***
2. ***If your regular doctor is concerned about a possible infection, he or she will place a consult for you to be seen in the Infectious Diseases Clinic.***
3. ***If you are infected with HIV, the Infectious Diseases Specialist should be your regular doctor. This can be arranged by having your current doctor place a consult for you to be seen in the Infectious Diseases Clinic or by***



**Botfly infestation in a traveler returning from Costa Rica.**



**Hookworm infection in a troop returning from Peru.**



## When do you need to see an Infectious Diseases Specialist?

Not everyone who has an infectious disease needs an infectious disease specialist. Your general internist can take care of most infections, but sometimes specialized expertise is needed to either diagnose or manage specific infectious diseases.

When a fever raises the suspicion that you may have an infection, when an infection is potentially serious, or when problems occur with treatment, it may be necessary to consult an infectious diseases specialist. ID specialists can provide special insight into tests that will be helpful in diagnosing and understanding the infection and preventing recurrent infections. They can often help determine what treatment you need, if any, and whether you should receive antibiotics. You may not require any treatment, but if you do, they may confer with your personal physician about which diagnostic testing and forms of treatment are best suited to your needs.

If you are hospitalized for an infection or acquire an infection while hospitalized, ID specialists will follow and help direct your hospital care. In some cases, they may continue to see you after you go home from the hospital.

## How does an Infectious Diseases Specialist work with your primary care physician?

Although infectious diseases specialists sometimes serve as primary care physicians, in most cases you will still need your regular doctor. Usually you will be asked to return to the ID specialist for a follow-up visit to review test results and to